

3 Critical Lessons for When You Want to Tell God, 'I Can Do It Myself'

"I did it!!" My grandson exclaimed. He lifted big blue eyes to mine. They glowed with surprise and wonder at his new accomplishment.

He leaned back on the wooden floor, and a huge smile lit his face. He shoved one leg straight in front of my face, his shoe inches from my nose. Maneuvering the correct shoe onto the right foot was a great achievement for a 3-year-old, but an even bigger victory was the tug of war that didn't happen.

Because that cute, scary and downright irritating self-defiant streak of "I can do it by myself" is like a military coup waiting to erupt.

I confess, when my children were little, there were times I looked in the mirror and asked, "Who is the adult here?"

Accomplishing tasks produces satisfaction and confidence. Learning independence is a valuable process. Through it we learn perseverance when a job seems too difficult. We acquire wisdom to know when help is needed and build courage to try new things. These are things we want for our little ones.

But it's a tall order to distinguish between encouraging a spirit of self-sufficiency and giving in to foolish demands. Both child and grown-up can easily find themselves in a frustrating cycle.

Learning skills is fertile ground for acquiring dependence on Christ. The wisdom of Proverbs is a great place to dig into God's direction when things are too hard to accomplish alone.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your

own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).

It is a twisty road at times to transfer “by myself” to a sincere heart of “with God’s help.” How often I discover my adult self in that same struggle. I want to do things by myself when I have a Heavenly Father who desires me to depend on Him. If our goal is to guide children to greater trust in their heavenly Father, then the most effective way to do that as a parent is to first come under God’s chisel ourselves. We need to be parents that grow too.

A learner embraces humility. There are times it is fitting to allow children to “do it by themselves,” and other times, it’s neither appropriate nor safe. Giving small pieces of a bigger job offers satisfaction and increases ability. Skills developed under the watchful partnership of a loving adult nurture trust. It applies to us as well. As we obey, under the caring eye of Jesus, we learn trust.

Trial and error are great tutors. Both success and failure teach. When we direct with purpose, children’s understanding increases, and they grow in knowledge of what they can do and what they should. Patience is a part of the process whether you are big or little. Learning from mistakes increases wisdom whatever age.

Admit when you need help. When we as parents turn to God in our difficulties, we model an example for our children to follow. The quest and realization for independence offers opportunities to learn and teach Christ dependence in tandem.

It’s almost always easier to do it yourself rather than wait for a child’s “by myself,” yet, those moments supply simple lessons that serve throughout their lives. They are reminders of God’s infinite patience toward us daily. In the process of learning, we grasp our need for God’s help.

My grandson looked expectantly into my eyes, wobbling a little

on his haunches with one foot extended. He waited for the approval he was sure would come. I grabbed his little shoe and furrowed my brow over its inspection while he balanced.

I looked up with surprise and cheered. "You did it!" I clapped my hands.

His smile was well worth the wait. {eo}

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